

October 5, 1997

Winfield Bauers  
9230 Edmund Street  
Philadelphia, PA 19114-4004

Dear Winfield,

Thank you for submitting documentation on the Swainson's Hawk you saw in Philadelphia on 15 October 1995 to P.O.R.C. After careful review and discussion, we regret that we are unable to accept this record. There was concern within the committee that the description submitted did not contain enough detail to convincingly rule out other species of hawks specifically Red-tailed Hawk or Broad-winged Hawk and that the description was confusing regarding the bird's underparts. The head was described as appearing all dark but a light morph Swainson's Hawk should show a light throat. A more complete description of the upper breast and belly as to absence or presence of streaking would have been helpful.

This of course, does not mean the bird was not a Swainson's Hawk, merely, that the record is not beyond reasonable doubt for acceptance

We hope that this does not discourage you from submitting documentation on any rare birds you find in the future. Please be encouraged to send as much detail as possible when submitting a report.

Sincerely,

Nick Pulcinella  
Chairman

Record # 186-02-1995

186-02-1995

First Philadelphia Record of Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

Winfield Bauers

On October 15, 1995, while cleaning my backyard in the Tomesdale section near the Delaware River in northeast Philadelphia, I saw an adult Swainson's Hawk flying no more than 100 feet above my head. It was about 11 am and the light was perfect. However, there were exceptionally strong northwest winds, which may have accounted for the low flight of the bird. The bird was buffeted in the wind but still making its way to the southwest. It was in sight no longer than 20 seconds.

Regretably, no other observers were present to witness the bird.

The bird was an apparent light phase adult. I was immediated riveted to the contrasting colors of the underwings. The primaries and secondaries were dark and contrasted distinctly from the underwing linings which were light colored. The upper breast of this bird was dark and contrasted with its light belly. The head appeared all dark. I was so riveted on the forward underparts and underwing of this bird that I failed to register any tail marking.

Due to the buffeting of the wind I was unable to get an idea of the wing to body angle, but the bird was large and clearly buteo shaped, the wing tips were slightly rounded and wings somewhat broad. I also was unable to see any of the upper parts of the bird. Despite these limitations and the fact that I did not have my binoculars with me at the time, I am certain that this is the same bird I had seen over the years at least 50 times in Florida.

I eliminated the male Northern Harrier because the bird I saw was buteo shaped, the underparts (upper breast and underwings) were more contrasting than those of a male Harrier, the wings seemed broader than those of a harrier and this bird's tail, while not studied, did not strike me as long as that of a harrier. It was not an

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adult Red-tailed Hawk because my bird had neither a belly band nor dark patagial marks.

I immediately went inside and checked the 4th edition of the Peterson Field Guide, (1980), plates on pages 155 and 165. My observation very closely resembled the Peterson plates.

[Compiler's addition, Ed Fingerhood]

To my knowledge, the only other recent southeastern Pennsylvania record of Swainson's Hawk, was an adult observed at Militia Hill, Montgomery County, September 3, 1994 (Marylea Klauder, pers comm). Swainson's Hawks overfly Cape May, NJ in low numbers anytime between early August and early December (Sibley, 1993:44). Hawk Mountain Swainson's Hawks have been recorded from September 9 to November 22. Coincidentally, indicating a mean migration date [ $x = 11$ ] of October 15. (Laurie Goodrich, pers comm). Santner, et al (1992:19) does not recognize the Swainson's Hawk in the Delaware Region of Pennsylvania, but notes that they pass through the state from mid-September through the beginning of November.

Bauers' observation places this bird well within corresponding migration data throughout the region. If accepted by the PORC, this will be the first Philadelphia record of Swainson's Hawk.

#### Bibliography:

Santner, Steven J., et al. 1992, Annotated List of the Birds of Pennsylvania, Pennsylvania Biological Survey #4.

Sibley, David, 1993, The Birds of Cape May, Cape May Bird Observatory, Cape May Point, N.J.

Pennsylvania Ornithological Records Committee

Voting Tabulation - Round # 1 of

Species: Swainson's Hawk (*Buteo swainsoni*)

Date of Sighting: 15 October 1995 to 15 October 1995

Location: PHILADELPHIA

County: PHILADELPHIA

Observer(s): Winfield Bauers

Date of Submission: 1995

Submitted by: Winfield Bauers

Written Description: YES Photo: NO Specimen: NO

Recording: NONE

Member	Class I	Class II	Class III	Class IV	Class V			Abstain
					A	B	C	
F. Haas			X					
N. Pulcinella				X				
E. Kwater						X		
R. Ickes								X
G. McWilliams				X				
P. Schwalbe			X					
S. Feldstein				X				
TOTALS			2	3		1		1
DECISION				X				

Comments:

Signature (Secretary):

*F. I. Haas*

Date:

2-22-97